

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4372

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, MILI, PBOR, IS, LE
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: (A) BEIRUT 4204, (B) BEIRUT 4240, (C) TEL AVIV 6517,
(D) BEIRUT 4278, (E) STATE 206396, (F) BEIRUT 4350,
(G) TEL AVIV 6594

1. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS CALLED ME AT 10:00 A.M.
SEPTEMBER 2, JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR ARAB LEAGUE
MEETING IN CAIRO, TO SAY THAT ADF COMMANDER SAMI KHATIB WAS
WORKING OUT NEW LOCATIONS FOR PALESTINIAN POSTS THAT WOULD
REMAIN IN SOUTH LEBANON AND WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH POLOFF
AS SOON AS THEY WERE AGREED. POLOFF MET WITH KHATIB AT 1300
SEPTEMBER 3 AND WAS GIVEN FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

2. PLO AGREES TO NEW LOCATIONS. KHATIB SAID HE HAD CON-
TACTED ABU IYAD SEPTEMBER 2 TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE NEW LOCATIONS
OF POSTS IN "MIDDLE SECTOR" AND IN ARQOUB. ABU IYAD
DISCUSSED MATTER WITH LEADERSHIP "FROM ALL THE
PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS" EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 2 AND

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MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 3. HE CALLED KHATIB AT NOON
SEPTEMBER 3 TO ADVISE THAT PLO ACCEPTED NEW LOCATIONS.

3. "MIDDLE SECTOR." KHATIB GAVE MOLINEAUX COPY OF MAP
OVERLAY SHOWING EXACT LOCATIONS OF NEW POSTS IN "MIDDLE
SECTOR" AS FOLLOWS:

COORDINATES DISTANCE FROM BORDER

1) 3315N 3525E	10.5 KILOMETERS
2) 3312N 3525E	11 "
3) 3311N 3524E	11.5
4) 3311N 3522E	10.5
5) 3312N 3520E	10

KHATIB SAID PALESTINIANS DID NOT WANT EXACT LOCATIONS GIVEN TO ISRAELIS, SINCE ISRAELIS MIGHT ATTACK THEM. HOWEVER, KHATIB SAID ON PERSONAL BASIS THAT IF IT WERE NECESSARY TO GIVE ISRAELIS EXACT LOCATIONS TO SECURE THEIR ASSENT, IT SHOULD BE DONE.

4. EACH POST IS ALLOWED MAXIMUM OF 50 PALESTINIANS AT ANY ONE TIME, KHATIB SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT IN FACT THE NUMBER WOULD NEVER EXCEED 10 OR 15. NO ARMED PALESTINIANS WHATSOEVER WOULD BE ALLOWED CLOSER TO ISRAELI BORDER. LEBANESE ARMY TROOPS WILL BE DEPLOYED ALONG BORDER AND IN TEN KILOMETER ZONE. THEY WILL BE IN CONTINUOUS CONTACT WITH ADF UNITS NORTH OF "RED LINE" AND WILL REPORT CONSTANTLY ON PALESTINIAN MOVEMENTS. IF PRESSURE NEEDED TO BE APPLIED ON PALESTINIANS TO ABIDE BY AGREEMENT, IT WILL BE DONE BY SYRIAN ARMY IN SYRIA AND IN LEBANON NORTH OF RED LINE, WHERE BULK OF PALESTINIANS WILL BE LOCATED.

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5. ARQOUB. OVERLAY SHOWS TWO SETS OF THREE POSTS EACH WHERE PALESTINIANS MAY BE LOCATED IN ARQOUB. PALESTINIANS WOULD USE EITHER SET "A" OR SET "B", BUT NOT BOTH:

COORDINATES DISTANCE FROM BORDER
(OF OCCUPIED SYRIA); THE ARE
FURTHER AWAY FROM ISRAELI BORDER

"A"

1) 3324N 3540 E	9.5
2) 3323N 3539E	9
3) 3322N 3538E	8

"B"

1) 3326N 3543E	10.5
2) 3325N 3542E	10
3) 3325N 3544E	8.5

6. KHATIB SAID THESE THREE POSTS WOULD HAVE NO WEAPONRY HEAVIER THAN THE 120 MM MORTAR, WHICH HAS MAXIMUM RANGE OF SEVEN KILOMETERS. KHATIB SAID THAT GOL INTERPRETATION OF CAIRO ACCORD PROVIDES FOR A LEBANESE ARMY COMMISSION TO

UNILATERALLY STUDY PALESTINIAN SITUATION IN ARQOUB AND ESTABLISH MAXIMUM NUMBER OF COMBATTANTS. THIS HAD ALREADY BEEN DONE, AND COMMISSION HAD DECIDED ON MAXIMUM OF 600. KHATIB STRESSED THAT ARQOUB POSITIONS WERE MILITARILY DOMINATED BY ISRAELIS ON TOP OF MT. HERMON. HE SAID THAT AREA WAS LARGELY UNINHABITABLE IN WINTER AND THAT HE BELIEVED THERE WOULD IN FACT NOT BE MORE THAN HANDFUL OF PALESTINIAN TROOPS IN THE AREA. HE ALSO DID NOT BELIEVE PALESTINIANS WOULD CONCENTRATE IN ONE SMALL AREA, WHICH WOULD PRESENT EASY TARGET TO ISRAELIS.

7. WESTERN SECTOR. THERE WILL BE NO PALESTINIAN MILITARY PRESENCE AT ALL IN WESTERN SECTOR ALONG COAST. IN REFUGEE CAMPS NEAR TYRE, RULES WOULD BE IDENTICAL TO THOSE APPLIED
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TO CAMPS NEAR BEIRUT: SEVEN PALESTINIAN ARMED STRUGGLE COMMAND (PASC) MEMBERS PER 1000 POPULATION WOULD BE ALLOWED LIGHT WEAPONS, INSIDE CAMPS ONLY. OUTSIDE CAMPS, AREA WILL BE CONTROLLED ENTIRELY BY LEBANESE ARMY.

8. BORDER. KHATIB SAID LEBANESE ARMY WOULD PATROL ENTIRE BORDER FROM THE SEA EASTWARD TO THE HASBANI RIVER, JUST SOUTHEAST OF KHIAM AT BEGINNING OF THE ARQOUB, AS WELL AS AREA BEHIND THE BORDER. HE SAID ABU IYAD HAD EXPLICITLY STATED THERE WOULD BE NO PALESTINIAN OPERATIONS AND NO INFILTRATION ACTIVITY AGAINST ISRAEL.

9. TOTAL OF PALESTINIAN COMBATTANTS PERMITTED IN ALL OF SOUTH LEBANON AND THE ARQOUB BY AGREEMENT IS 850. KHATIB DESCRIBED THIS AS A "THEORETICAL" MAXIMUM AND SAID ACTUAL NUMBER WILL BE LESS. HE SAID HOWEVER THAT THIS CONSTITUTED "MAXIMUM POLITICAL CONCESSION" PALESTINIANS WERE ABLE TO MAKE. THEY COULD NOT FORMALLY AGREE TO MORE BECAUSE THEY HAD TO MAINTAIN APPEARANCE TO RAND-AND-FILE THAT POSSIBILITY OF ARMED STRUGGLE WITH ISRAEL WAS BEING MAINTAINED.

10. EVACUATION. KHATIB SHOWED POLOFF BUT DID NOT OFFER COPY OF DETAILED OVERLAY SHOWING EVACUATION ROUTES AND ASSEMBLY AREAS IN ALL THREE SECTORS. HE SAID PALESTINIANS WOULD NOT ANNOUNCE EVACUATION UNTIL IT WAS COMPLETED, LEST CONVOYS PRESENT EASY TARGETS TO ISRAELIS. HE SAID SYRIANS HAD AGREED TO ACCEPT GREAT BULK OF PALESTINIAN COMBATTANTS. (KARIM PAKRADOUNI OF PHALANGE POLITBURO, WHO HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM SEPTEMBER 1, TOLD POLOFF SAME THING ON SEPTEMBER 2). KHATIB SAID SOME WOULD ALSO GO TO REFUGEE CAMPS IN BEIRUT, TRIPOLI AND ELSEWHERE, AFTER BEING DISARMED. SOME STUDENTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE TYPES HAD IN FACT ALREADY LEFT SOUTH - WHICH HE
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THOUGHT ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE SHOULD ALREADY KNOW.

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11. IMPLEMENTATION. KHATIB SAID PALESTINIANS SAID THEY WERE PREPARED TO ANNOUNCE A CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH AND BEGIN IMPLEMENTATION AS SOON AS US PASSED WORD THAT ISRAELIS WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THESE ARRANGEMENTS. PALESTINIANS WOULD MAKE ANNOUNCEMENT ON THEIR OWN RADIO ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: "THE RESISTANCE COMMITS ITSELF TO AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON. IT WILL NOT UNDERTAKE ACTS WHICH WOULD UNDERMINE SECURITY IN THE SOUTH." SECOND PHRASE, KHATIB SAID, WOULD BE SIGNAL TO ISRAELIS THAT PALESTINIANS WOULD UNDERTAKE NO HOSTILE ACTIONS TOWARDS ISRAEL. WITHDRAWALS, WHICH WOULD BEGIN IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER, WOULD BE COMPLETED IN ABOUT 15 DAYS. AS PALESTINIANS WITHDREW, LEBANESE ARMY ELEMENTS WILL TAKE OVER CONTROL OF AREAS, ALTHOUGH NOT NECESSARILY PHYSICALLY IN EXACT SAME LOCATIONS PREVIOUSLY OCCUPIED BY PALESTINIANS.

12. COMMENT:

(A) DESPITE THE CONFUSION AND INCONSISTENCIES OF THE LAST FEW DAYS, AND THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS THAT STILL

EXIST, THIS LATEST VERSION OF PHASE 3 OF THE SHTAURA AGREE-
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MENT AS PRESENTED TO US BY BOUTROS AND KHATIB, OFFERS A REAL CHANCE FOR PEACE IN SOUTH LEBANON. WE HAVE HEARD NOT ONLY FROM BOUTROS AND KHATIB BUT ALSO FROM OTHER SOURCES HERE, BOTH LEBANESE POLITICIANS AND ARAB DIPLOMATS, THAT THE PALESTINIANS, FOR REASONS OF THEIR OWN (WHICH WE WILL EXAMINE IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE) HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE UP THEIR "MORTAR WAR" WITH CHRISTIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON AND WITHDRAW FROM THAT AREA. THEY ARE LEAVING 250 MEN BEHIND, SPREAD BETWEEN FIVE POSTS, FOR POLITICAL, NOT MILITARY, REASONS. EVEN THE CAIRO/MELKART ACCORDS AS PUBLISHED BY CAMILLE CHAMOUN AS AN ANNEX TO HIS LATEST BOOK "CRISIS IN LEBANON" ALLOWS THEM THIS NUMBER. IF THE PLO WERE TO WITHDRAW COMPLETELY FROM SOUTH LEBANON, IT WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO ADMITTING PUBLICLY THAT THEY HAD NO HOPE OF RETURNING TO PALESTINE AND THIS THEY CANNOT DO, PARTICULARLY IF THEY EXPECT THE REJECTIONISTS TO COOPERATE. THE NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS ALLOWED IN THE ARQOUB MAY SEEM LARGE BUT AS DAYAN AND WEIZMAN HAVE INDICATED, THEY POSE NO THREAT TO ISRAEL. THIS AREA, THE WESTERN SLOPE OF MT. HERMON, IS DEMONATED BY THE ISRAELIS AND IS NOT A SUITABLE JUMPING OFF PLACE FOR RAIDS INTO ISRAEL, PARTICULARLY WITH WINTER COMING ON. THERE IS ALSO A LOGISTICAL PROBLEM; THE PALESTINIANS LEAVING SOUTH LEBANON MUST HAVE SOME PLACE TO GO AND THE ARQOUB IS THE OBVIOUS AND BEST STAGING AREA ON THEIR WAY OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

(B) ALTHOUGH BOUTROS HAS SAID NOTHING TO US ABOUT THE "GOOD FENCE," THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL SIGNS RECENTLY THAT THE GOL WILL PERMIT CONTINUING CONTACTS BETWEEN LEBANESE AND ISRAELIS LIVING IN THE BORDER AREA, PROVIDED THAT THE GOI DOES NOT EMBARRASS THEM PUBLICALLY BY TRYING TO MAKE PROPAGANDA CAPITAL OUT OF THESE CONTACTS. AS
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ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE, BOUTROS HAS SAID THAT GOL DOES NOT PLAN TO TAKE ANY ACTION AGAINST CHRISTIAN OFFICERS AND MEN WHO HAVE BEEN OPERATING INDEPENDENTLY IN THE SOUTH. IN FACT, THE REALITIES OF LEBANESE POLITICS; I.E. THE POLITICAL STRENGTH OF THE KFUR FRONT, MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GOL TO DISCIPLINE THESE ELEMENTS, EVEN SHOULD IT WISH TO DO SO.

(C) FOR LEBANON AS A COUNTRY AND PARTICULARLY FOR SARKIS AS ITS PRESIDENT, PROMPT IMPLEMENTATION OF PHASE 3 OF THE SHTAURA ACCORDS IS CRUCIAL. THE BEIRQT PRESS ANNOUNCES ALMOST DAILY THAT PHASE 3 WILL BEGIN "WITHIN THE COMING WEEK" AND ABU IYAD ANNOUNCED SEPTEMBER 2 THAT AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED AND IMPLEMENTATION AWAITED ONLY THE ORDERS OF THE PRESIDENT. THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF SARKIS' INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT (SEPTEMBER 22) IS FAST APPROACHING AND HE HAS FEW ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO POINT TO. IF HE CAN BRING PEACE TO THE SOUTH, HIS AUTHORITY WILL BE STRENGTHENED; IF HE FAILS, HIS PRESTIGE MAY BE IRRETRIEVABLY DAMAGED AND THE TENDENCY OF THE MARONITES TO THINK IN TERMS OF PARTITION WILL GROW.

(D) U.S. PRESTIGE IS ALSO ENGAGED. WE HAVE BEEN SAYING FOR MORE THAN A YEAR THAT WE SUPPORT THE UNITY, NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON AND THE EFFORTS OF PRESIDENT SARKIS TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS. UP TO NOW THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE IN THE WAY OF POLITICAL ACTION THAT WE COULD TAKE TO IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY. WE NOW HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW THAT WE MEAN IT. IF SARKIS IS UNABLE TO BRING PEACE TO SOUTH LEBANON, OUR EFFORTS TO HELP REBUILD THE LEBANESE ARMY AND THE LEBANESE SOCIETY ARE LIKELY TO BE FRUITLESS.

(E) MY PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH BOUTROS INDICATE THAT HE IS LOOKING FOR OUR HELP TO PERSUADE THE ISRAELIS:

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(1) TO CEASE FIRING ON THE PALESTINIANS WHEN THE PALESTINIANS ANNOUNCE THEIR CEASEFIRE AND TO INSTRUCT THEIR CHRISTIAN ALLIES IN THE SOUTH TO FOLLOW THE SAME POLICY; AND,

(2) TO PERSUADE THE CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH NOT TO OPPOSE THE ENTRY OF THE LEBANESE ARMY FORCE THAT WILL BE SENT IN BY GENERAL KHOURY. HE NEEDS AN ASSURANCE FROM US THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL ADPT A "WAIT AND SEE" ATTITUDE, THAT THEY WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PHASE 3 OF THE SHTAURA ACCORDS BUT WILL GIVE IT A CHANCE TO WORK. IF THE ISRAELIS ARE INTERESTED IN PEACE ON THEIR NORTHERN BORDER AND IN TAKING THE PRESSURE OFF THEIR "BELEAGURED" CHRISTIAN ALLIES, IT WOULD SEEM TO BE IN THEIR INTEREST TO AGREE

13. BOUTROS WILL RETURN FROM ARAB LEAGUE MEETING IN CAIRO ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 5, OR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6. HE IS CERTAIN TO CALL ME IN ALMOST AS SOON AS HE RETURNS TO ASK:
(1) WHAT IS ISRAELI REACTION TO PHASE 3 OF SHTAURA AGREEMENT, AND
(2) WHAT IS USG VIEW? I WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING INSTRUCTIONS ASAP ON HOW MUCH OF WEIZMAN/DAYAN COMMENTS I SHOULD PASS TO

BOUTROS AND DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS.

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